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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

REVIEW OF REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF AFFECTED AFRICAN COUNTRY
PARTIES, INCLUDING ON THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS AND ON EXPERIENCES
GAINED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION
OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

Addendum

SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. By its decision 5/COP.2, the Conference of the Parties (COP) reaffirmed decision 11/COP.1 on procedures for the communication of information and review of implementation, and thus requested the secretariat to prepare a synthesis (decision 11/COP.1, paragraph 17) based on the information contained in national reports, to be considered by the Conference of the Parties at its third session (COP 3). In accordance with decision 5/COP.2, paragraph 1, the reports of African country Parties only are to be considered at COP 3.

2. Decision 11/COP.1 provided the guidelines and procedures for organizing and streamlining the communication of information pursuant to article 26 of the Convention, in order to facilitate the review of implementation by the Conference of the Parties in accordance with article 22, paragraph 2(a) and 2(b) of the Convention. The objectives of the procedures include:

(a) To ensure the effective assessment of progress towards achieving the objectives of the Convention and to enable the Conference of the Parties to make appropriate recommendations to further those objectives;

(b) To exchange information and data among Parties in order to maximize the benefits of successful measures and initiatives under the Convention;

(c) To ensure that the Committee on Science and Technology and the Global Mechanism have access to the information and data necessary to carry out their mandates;

(d) To ensure that information on implementation is in the public domain and available to the international community, particularly intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and other interested parties.

3. Decision 11/COP.1, paragraph 3, states that each Party shall communicate to the Conference of the Parties for consideration at its ordinary sessions, through the secretariat, reports on the measures which it has taken for the implementation of the Convention.

4. Paragraph 4 states that affected country Parties shall provide a description of the strategies established pursuant to article 5 of the Convention and any relevant information on their implementation.

5. Paragraph 5 provides that affected country Parties which implement action programmes pursuant to articles 9 to 15 of the Convention shall provide a detailed description of the programmes and their implementation.

6. Paragraph 10 specifies the format and content of the national reports, under nine chapter headings (see annex I). The UNCCD secretariat has prepared, in collaboration with several United Nations agencies and African subregional

organizations, a Help Guide based on the contents of decision 11/COP.1, paragraph 10(a). The Help Guide was designed to provide a common format, practical recommendations and support for preparation of the national reports (see ICCD/COP(3)/INF.3).

7. Section II of this note provides a general recapitulation of the national reports received by the secretariat by the agreed deadline of 31 May 1999 and up to the first week of July 1999.

8. The information contained in section III is a synthesis of the national reports, grouped into subsections in accordance with the table of contents of national reports provided for in decision 11/COP.1, paragraph 10(a), and as elaborated on in the Help Guide.

9. Section IV presents the lessons learned and challenges encountered in the formulation and implementation of national action programmes (NAPs), especially pursuant to the Regional Implementation Annex for Africa, articles 6 to 9. Two issues, among others, stand out as key challenges, namely, attracting developed country Parties to form substantive and long-lasting partnerships in the implementation of the national action programmes; and the opportunities for synergy in the implementation at national and community level, of the three Rio conventions on biological diversity, climate change and desertification.

10. Section V summarizes the key recommendations on the content and process of national reporting under the Convention.

II. NATIONAL REPORTS RECEIVED

11. Although the deadline set for submitting national reports was 31 May 1999, some reports were received into the first week of July. A total of 39 reports were received (75 per cent of the Africa region). Eighteen of the reports were in French, nineteen in English and two in Arabic. This note was prepared on the basis of the information contained in the national reports. Three reports were presented in summary or interim format, without stating whether final reports will be submitted later. In order to ensure that the reports are widely accessible, the secretariat will make available on the Convention's Web site (www.unccd.de) those reports submitted in electronic form.

12. The format and content of the reports are standardized according to decision 11/COP.1 and Help Guide. The Help Guide sets a limit of 30 pages for reports, and all Parties which submitted full reports respected this limit. However, in content and style of presentation, the reports still present a diverse approach.

13. The Parties whose reports formed the basis of this note are listed in annex II.

III. SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS

14. Most reports presented mainly factual information while some provided critical and evaluative analysis. There is, however, sufficient basis to draw conclusions on emerging trends on the implementation of the Convention at the national level. It should be pointed out that the synthesis report might not reflect all the richness and detail of the individual reports and therefore Parties are invited to look at the individual reports in detail.

15. Summaries of national reports are contained in documents ICCD/COP(3)/5/Add.2 (A), (B), (C), (D) and (E).

16. One of the conclusions that can be drawn from the reports is that African country Parties are committed to the implementation of the Convention and regard the Convention as a vehicle for proper management of natural resources for sustainable development. The Convention has helped Parties to refocus ongoing policies, strategies and action programmes and has added value to environment and natural resources management activities towards achieving sustainable development. In this regard the reports show that:

(a) African country Parties are definitely engaged in the process of preparation and implementation of national action programmes and are basically allocating resources to support the process according to their abilities;

(b) Significant reforms in institutional arrangements and legislative measures are being made in most countries to integrate the provisions of the Convention into sectoral activities as called for in the Regional Implementation Annex for Africa, article 6;

(c) There are continuing requests by African country Parties for financial and technical assistance to formulate and implement programmes and projects from the NAP priority areas at national and local community levels;

(d) The phenomenon of recurrent droughts and desertification constitutes a threat to the livelihoods of millions of people in Africa who depend on the land for most of their needs. The reports indicate that a high percentage of national land area is affected by land degradation and desertification, even in countries outside the Sudano-Sahelian and Kalahari-Namib arid and semi-arid zones.

A. Strategies and priorities established within the framework of sustainable development plans and/or policies

17. Parties were requested through the Help Guide to provide information on national plans and strategies available in other social and economic areas which have relevance to combating desertification, such as national development plans and national environmental strategies and on national plans and strategies in the field of combating desertification developed prior to the UNCCD including national and

local Agendas 21 and national conservation strategies. Other relevant plans or strategies, especially sectoral ones, were also to be reported on.

18. The reports present information on various strategies and plans that are relevant to environmental management, including the combat against desertification. The national constitutions of several countries have articles which vest responsibility in the State to regulate all land, water and natural resources and to ensure their management in a balanced and sustainable manner in the interest of the present and future generations.

19. Of the plans and strategies available to combat desertification, the national development plans are cited as important policy instruments as they always include provisions for environmental management. The reports show that there is a definite trend for national development plans formulated after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio Earth Summit) to address issues of land degradation more directly and effectively than before.

20. All reports show that the countries have formulated environmental policies, strategies and action plans to address the many problems associated with desertification and drought. National conservation strategies, national environmental (management) policies or national environmental action plans have been formulated and in most cases are being implemented. Most Parties have been gathering experience in the field of national conservation strategies and environmental action plans during the past few decades, and promise to review, enhance and optimize them. NAPs are being formulated in the context of these conservation strategies and action plans.

21. A plethora of sectoral policies, strategies and action programmes is presented in each country report, ranging from agriculture and livestock development to conservation of water and soil management, forestry, energy, land, wildlife, population, poverty alleviation, disaster management, education and tourism. The reports did not mention any policies and strategies to deal with the problems of refugees or land mines, both of which impact on land degradation and land use in the countries experiencing internal and cross-border conflicts.

22. Some observations about the sectoral policies and programmes are necessary: Firstly, some of these new policies and legislations are subsequent to the entry into force of the UNCCD and one can deduce that they are a direct effort to combat desertification; secondly, the land reforms and legislations are significant in the sense that they are strengthening the basis for sustainable land management by stabilizing land tenure and access to land, and enshrining the right of women to own land; thirdly, the various policies are mutually supportive in preventing and/or reversing land degradation.

23. National and local Agendas 21 are mentioned in most of the reports, and national biodiversity strategies and action plans as well as climate change projects, in some of the reports. In most cases the same ministry coordinating the

NAP process, usually the ministry of the environment, is also dealing with biodiversity and climate change issues. But only some of the reports indicated the practice of coordinating action programmes among the three conventions. A comment in one of the reports, talking about the policy of integrating biodiversity issues into development planning, recommends that this policy be more concretized, taking into account the role biodiversity can play in combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, and that detailed strategies for its implementation be formulated. The need for synergy in implementing the three conventions at the national and community level cannot be overemphasized, for it is at the local level that local development programmes under the NAP can provide the framework to achieve it.

24. Decentralization is mentioned in many of the reports as a strategy needed for empowering local communities to manage natural resources in a sustainable manner. Most Parties state that they are encouraging decentralized systems of government.

25. Sudano-Sahelian countries affected by the 1972/73 severe drought have continued to make specific plans and strategies to address desertification and were inspired by the United Nations Conference on Desertification (Nairobi, 1977). The few other reports that make reference to the same conference state that they did not make specific plans or strategies on desertification after the conference. No reasons are given. The other countries started in the 1980s and 1990s to consider questions of combating desertification and sustainable management in plans and programmes at sectoral and national level.

B. Institutional measures taken to implement the Convention

26. On the establishment and functioning of the UNCCD national coordinating body (NCB), the reports were expected to provide information on the legal status, intersectoral and multi-disciplinary character of the NCB, its composition and mode of operation, and on status of information and data.

27. Except for three reports, which do not confirm clearly the existence of a national coordinating body, all the reports indicate that a government ministry or environmental body has been designated as national focal point for coordinating the implementation of the UNCCD. In all cases a national steering committee or task force has been set up as the policy-making body with multisectoral representation from the key government ministries, institutions of higher learning and research, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs), private sector and donor community.

28. Most of the national steering committees are under ministries in charge of the environment or agriculture, a few under the prime minister's or vice-president's office and most of them have been created by ministerial decree and by nomination. The representatives are senior, experienced people trained in natural resources management. Most reports state that the NCB has no independent legal status but derives its authority from that of the ministry in which it is based. A few of the

reports state that this situation is under review. One report emphasizes the fact that the NCB and its work is the domain of the State and that cooperating partners from local or civil society are limited to "their specific prerogatives." Similarly most reports state that the NCB has no financial autonomy, is funded from the ministry allocations and is dependent on donor funds. Most reports give a clear summary of the donor funds on which the NAP process has been developed.

29. The functions and mandate of the NCBs are usually specified in the terms of reference establishing the NCB and are specific to the intersectoral coordination as well as the elaboration, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the NAP.

30. Within the NCB there is usually a national focal point person who is normally in charge of a small technical secretariat which works with a technical committee and in some countries there are task force or working group subcommittees. Most reports state that human resources and expertise at the NAP secretariat and the technical committee need strengthening to meet the increasing challenges of NAP implementation. One report admits that they have not yet worked out the integration of the national focal point into the national environmental institutional framework, and that the national focal point is not functional due to severe lack of funds and lack of terms of reference.

31. Communication or networking among members of the NCB is reported to be through staff meetings where they report on activities of their organizations; circulation of proceedings of meetings, workshops, seminars, site visits to projects supported by the committee or the NCB; and, in some instances the more effective, face-to-face consultations. Electronic communication and networking are being developed, although still not well established in most countries.

32. The composition and mode of operation of the NCB is similar in the reports. Member institutions are identified by the steering committee and they in turn nominate their representatives to the steering committee. At least ten reports dealt with the composition of the NCB in detail and only three gave figures. In one report the NCB is composed of 25 members; 9 are female, the rest are male and 11 of these are from government departments. In another report the ratio of female representatives to male is 3 to 10 while that of government to civil society is 7 to 10. Another report has 68 per cent government representatives and the rest from the private sector, NGOs and academic institutions, and 27 per cent of the committee are women. Some reports state that efforts are under way to include more women representatives in the NCBs.

33. Concerning the mode of operation, in five countries the NCB is composed of a permanent executive structure reporting to a consultative non-permanent structure in which intersectoral representation is larger. Two reports state that the NCB is represented by a structure within a ministry, without mentioning other structures.

34. According to the reports, members of the steering committee and other NCB organs have been trained and sensitized and they in turn sensitize and inform their departments and organizations on their roles in conducting and participating in the NAP process.
35. Most of the reports indicate that the NCB and its organs meet according to the work plan and timetable as set in their programme of work under their terms of reference. In some countries there is an annual programme of work for the NCB.
36. Invariably the reports state that the NCB has no budget of its own, and this is a major limitation. Most NCBs depend on the budget allocations made by the ministry which hosts the NCB and they cover salaries of functionaries, office space, equipment, travel and running costs. The reports show big differences among the countries in these budget allocations. These allocations are inadequate, but in most cases cooperating partners supplemented them, especially during the preparatory phase of the NAP. Five of the reports express concern that they have not been able to complete their NAP preparatory phase, especially the consultative process, partly because of lack of funding.
37. Although half of the reports do not report explicitly on the status of information and data, the emerging trend is that most of the NCBs do not have their own information system or databases. But it is reported that a number of databases do exist in the countries at relevant institutions and are accessible to the NCB members. These databases contain national and subnational level information on climate, vegetation, soils, geology and drainage, agriculture and land use, human and livestock populations, forests and wildlife, to mention but a few. Some countries have put some of the drought and land degradation data from each sector on the Internet, while a few countries are assisting their NCBs to create inventories of all existing national databases relevant to drought and desertification. Only three Parties reported that they have established a programme on desertification information sharing systems (DIS) while the majority of the rest are establishing programmes in environmental information systems (EIS) which might include DIS.
38. The reports do mention that the information exchanged in support of the NAP by the NCB is basically about their work, reports and resource papers done by them or on their behalf. In some countries the limited availability of computers makes internal information exchange difficult. Most NAP focal point offices have access to E-mail and Internet and this makes external communication easier and cheaper.
39. With regard to institutional, legislative and regulative frameworks, the reports indicate that reviews were made to adapt and strengthen existing regulations. Some of the reports state that because of a recent national constitution or a recent environmental law and organization, the institutional framework for functional desertification control needs no review. In the majority of the reports, however, efforts are at various levels of reviewing and analysing the different, largely sectoral, laws and institutions in order to recommend

mechanisms suitable for coordinating and harmonizing actions to combat land degradation. Some of the recommended institutional and organizational measures were discussed at the first national forum in most countries. Recommendations were made and are yet to be implemented. One report states that "no formal review of mechanisms for coordination and harmonization of actions to combat land degradation at national and local level has been undertaken" and no reasons are given.

40. One report proposes using the existing decentralized institutional structure of the environmental protection agency, hence there is no need for reviews. Yet another report admits that the national institutional framework is entirely inadequate to effectively support the implementation of the convention and could not be reviewed so far due to lack of funding. The country also expresses concern that it is not a member of a subregional organization and thus misses support in this respect.

41. A few reports seem to have understood the question of capacity and institution building in the context of the "urgent action for Africa" awareness-raising campaigns, while others have reported that administrative changes and a decentralized approach to development planning have made it possible for local communities to participate in combating desertification. Three reports state that the issue is one of the priorities in the NAP implementation process proposed, and another state that a capacity-building programme for the focal point is under implementation. The majority of the reports give no information on the subject.

42. Some reports give a detailed overview of the institutions which form the framework at national level and which are closely collaborating with the NCB.

43. A good number of reports state that there is a clear interlinkage between the NAP process and the national economic and social development plan and other strategic plans, and the rest give no clear or direct information. They generally state that the analysis has been or is being made of existing plans and strategies, relevant to combating desertification, in order to ensure complementarity and avoidance of duplication of efforts. They also assert that the UNCCD principles of partnership building and participatory development are highly acknowledged by government. Two reports point out that NAP formulation accepts that policies, strategies and action programmes contained in national conservation strategies and national environmental action plans can very well serve the purposes of combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought in the relevant areas of natural resources. And where such strategies and action plans are lacking in combating desertification, the NAP has incorporated additional policies and strategies.

44. Most NAPs are in an advanced stage of preparation. Only in a few countries have they already been approved by government for implementation.

45. Eleven Parties reported linkage or coherence of the NAP with the subregional action plan (SRAP) through participation in SRAP activities and specific programmes, ranging from water resources and river basin rehabilitation, to strengthening of early warning systems in the context of the UNCCD and membership in the subregional Committee on Science and Technology (CST). They also interact with the regional action programme (RAP) through the thematic RAP workshops. Most Parties also reported receiving technical backstopping from the subregional organizations.

46. Most Parties have conducted an analysis of existing environmental and sectoral legislation with similar findings that, in most cases, such legislation was fragmented, weak and not functional and effective. Some Parties have amended some of the legislation, while the majority have proposed, and in some cases formulated new comprehensive environmental management and/or coordination laws. This is a very significant and positive effort by African country Parties to establish a strong and long-term foundation for implementing the UNCCD.

47. One country mentioned that the existing legal framework remains purely theoretical and has not been able to create any impact on the betterment of the overall situation, due to the economic crisis the country is going through.

48. The work on the establishment of coherent and functional legal and regulating frameworks in African countries as one of the vehicles for implementing the UNCCD illustrates the commitment and expectation of reversing land degradation and achieving sustainable development.

49. One report claims that one of the principal national goals has been to review and reformulate national laws to implement the notion of governance based on real decentralization of power.

C. Participatory process in support of the preparation
and implementation of the action programme

50. Several measures have been taken by many Parties to ensure real capacity and empowerment of local populations and authorities to participate in combating desertification. These include consultative workshops and seminars, development of locally adapted information kits in local languages, review and harmonization of sectoral and cross-sectoral policies to take account of local population's and authorities' aspirations, and adoption of decentralization policies that empower people. Non-governmental coordinating committees have also been formed to undertake networking and establish linkages at all levels in implementing the UNCCD.

51. One report states that under national law a network of NGOs has been created that contributes significantly to the work of the NCB.

52. The reports show that various strategies have effectively been applied together to inform and sensitize stakeholders at different levels in each country Party, in order to ensure their meaningful participation in the NAP process. National administrative and political structures and the agricultural extension system have been provided with information materials on combating land degradation targeted at the level intended, with different degrees of achievement in the different countries. Awareness campaigns and consultative workshops and seminars at various levels and for various target groups; NGO/CBO awareness forums and donor forums have all been implemented in a structured manner. Educational materials for primary, secondary and tertiary levels have been prepared and distributed; and UNCCD materials have been translated into local languages, posters, drama and song for community level sensitization.

53. Radio, television and the press are reported as the mechanisms for getting information to all stakeholders. In most African countries, radio broadcasts in local languages about combating land degradation are common-place.

54. Twenty reports mentioned the holding of a national forum to launch or to validate the national action programme to combat desertification. Another eight Parties plan to organize a national forum before COP 3. This represents a major milestone in the NAP process (see annex III).

55. The participatory process finds expression in representatives of stakeholders taking part in the campaigns, seminars, national forum workshops, steering committee and sub-committees and pilot projects. Most reports, therefore, recognize that it will need continued awareness-raising and education to get whole populations of districts, provinces and the country as a whole to participate effectively in the UNCCD process. Activities to commemorate the World Day to Combat Desertification, 17 June, were reported by most Parties.

56. Some reports stress that although a significant number of local initiatives have been taken, rural and community-based associations are still not able to communicate their real needs to the national level, to ensure real participation in environment and sustainable development policy. These groups are therefore not yet full partners in a self-developing environment to combat land degradation and desertification. It is also pointed out in some reports that sensitization creates great expectations at the community level and if these expectations are not met, loss of interest may ensue. Immediate follow-up action through local project implementation is therefore essential.

57. Information on the questions of gender policies and gender balance varies considerably in the reports. A significant number do not discuss the issue at all, while the majority state that the proportion of women participating in the NAP steering committee and its organs, and in the process of developing NAP projects, is targeted to increase. Although most reports state that the proportion of women participating at community level is in most cases higher than that of men, the

reports do not clarify whether the women are sufficiently sensitized and informed to make inputs.

58. Few of the reports mention gender awareness training for the steering committee and other organs. Several reports show that most governments are in the process of formulating gender policies, and some already have such policies. The overall situation is that women's participation in the NAP formulation process is still below the expected levels in all countries.

59. One report states that although 64.3 per cent of agricultural workers are women, only 5 percent of the rural chiefs are female. Some reports state that, besides women, youth are considered important for the participatory implementation of the Convention. In one case it is reported that youth under 18 years constitute 55 per cent of the country's population.

D. Consultative process in support of the preparation and implementation of the national action programme and the partnership agreement with developed country Parties and other interested entities

60. The reports acknowledge the various inputs of international partners into the NAP process as well as the partnership arrangements that are beginning to emerge. The measures taken by governments to ensure the involvement of international partners vary slightly among the African subregions. In the western African subregion the process of creating a donor consultative group or forum has been completed and six of the governments have designated a lead country from the group to serve as facilitator for the NAP process. Two reports mention that donors are involved without a formal or informal set-up. In the eastern and southern African subregions however, no government has designated a lead donor country because the process of establishing a donor consultative forum has not started or is still being discussed. In such cases the UNDP country office, which calls regular donor meetings, has been playing an important role by facilitating contacts and consultations between the NCB and the international partners. For northern Africa, the Maghreb-European (trans-Mediterranean) partnership approach is considered most important.

61. Measures taken to facilitate the participation of international partners as mentioned in most reports include: invitations to participate in all national UNCCD activities from the "early awareness creation days" seminars to all activities leading to the holding of the first national forum, to facilitate information sharing and solicit opinions and inputs of partners; direct consultations with their representatives; special donors' forums for specific reasons, for example on the establishment of the national desertification fund; and requests to UNDP country offices which are members of the national coordinating body, to act as the link and brief the international partners on the progress and problems in the implementation of the NAP process. Several Parties reported organizing "donors' forums" or "partners against desertification seminars" to try to create partnership agreements, but with mixed success.

62. Only one Party reported employing "full-time, a person to act as intermediate between the international agencies for donor funding and the government."

63. It may be noted that the consultative process with international partners has been more positive in the countries of the Sahel than in non-Sahelian countries in West Africa.

64. A significant number of reports were critical of the responses of international partners to government invitations to participate in national UNCCD activities. Sample of direct quotations from the reports illustrate the difficulties governments are encountering in trying to secure support from international partners for implementation of the UNCCD:

"-- Thus programmes like combating desertification, under the UNCCD, although in principle accepted and ratified by both parties, are further subjected to further conditionalities. Such recent conditionalities to aid have included such common phases as: structural adjustments, good governance, devolution of powers, democracy, responsibility, transparency, clear priority settings in national development programming and resource allocation, accountability, sustainability, eradication of corruption, equity and efficiency in the use of resources.

In addition, global economic recession is also commonly used to deny affected Parties from getting new and additional funding beyond traditional sources."

The report in question goes on to say that a donors' coordination committee on environment was "invited to participate in the first national forum, but only a few attended".

65. Another report states that although international partners have participated in the national forums and other activities on the UNCCD in the country, the steering committee and focal point have experienced certain problems:

"The problems are generally related to the misconceptions on desertification and knowledge of the UNCCD by some partners. In some cases international partners are not conversant with their mandate in the Convention. Others who are already supporting certain UNCCD related activities in the country do not feel compelled to follow the NAP process and this could result in either duplication of efforts or restricted implementation of the NAP."

66. Another Party states: "The involvement of cooperative partners in the process has also not been easy. The number of partners that responded to invitations to meetings and workshops was usually between 30 and 50 per cent. This can be attributed to the level of awareness of the donor institutions on the UNCCD and its provisions and to the specific agendas which donors have for their funding and support".

67. One report expresses concern that, though the country had been encouraging international partners to fund projects even before their NAP elaboration phase, except in one case, none of the partners responded to the requests. The result, according to another report, is insufficiency of financial and technical support by partners, and this calls for a review of the partnership arrangements as the process moves to the NAP implementation phase.

E. Measures taken or planned within the framework of the national action plan programme, including measures to improve the economic environment, to conserve natural resources, to improve institutional organizations, to improve knowledge of desertification and monitor and assess the effects of drought

68. All reports cover this subject fairly adequately but presentation of information on specific sections differs considerably, with some sections not being reported on at all in most reports, and other reports discussing mainly ongoing programmes and projects. Taken together, the information contained in the reports does, however, indicate emerging trends.

69. On diagnosis and evaluation of past experience, the reports, with a few exceptions, state that evaluations and studies of past experience and activities in the field of combating desertification were, and in some cases are, being carried out, mainly by local consultants, as the first step in NAP formulation. Some of the evaluations involved the majority of key stakeholders, especially NGOs and CBOs during the consultative workshops. The diagnosis provided information and proposals that formed part of the priority programme areas for the NAP as approved by the first national forum.

70. With regard to the establishment of technical programmes and integrated projects to combat desertification, the level of information in the reports varies considerably, with a number of reports providing a long list of ongoing projects in different natural resources sectors, as an inventory of projects which embody UNCCD principles and which are being integrated into the NAP process. Some reports discuss how this is being, and should be, done while a few reports also mention that evaluations, inventories and studies of natural resources management for integration into NAP have been published.

71. A few countries admit that the reviews and evaluations were not adequate and will conduct further studies, reviews and evaluations.

72. Various new actions and planned measures are discussed in most reports, varying from capacity-building mainly at local level and institutional reforms, to specific sectoral projects in water resources, agriculture, rural energy, education, etc. However, only a few reports clarify whether these are additional to those already identified in the NAP priority list. Most of the NAP priority projects are based on ongoing programmes and projects in different sectors and some are under implementation. Ten reports state that NAP priority programmes are integrated within the national environmental action plan or national conservation strategy.

Similarly, some reports state that new measures and actions will also be implemented, either as NAP pilot areas or community-based programmes.

73. A few reports mention harmonious links between NAP and SRAP in favour of both processes, and the country, through the national focal point or other representative participating in subregional action programme meetings. In addition, scientific and technical institutions are participating in existing networks mainly at the subregional level, thus making SRAP and NAP complementary.

74. Specific training and formulation of technical and scientific programmes do not seem to have taken place judging from the information in the reports, but specific actions and measures to strengthen national capacity to combat desertification, particularly at the local level, have been proposed as part of the NAP priority programmes to be implemented. Some reports mention that the evaluations, diagnosis and studies produced scientific and technical information on which the projects in the NAP are based. Other reports mention that the national scientific and technical institutions with capacity to train in natural resources management and in human resources development, which are participating fully in the NAP process, are already involved with training and strengthening the scientific and technical aspects of programmes for NAP implementation. One report states that:

"... Although the NAP project has been prepared, the lack of expertise within the country in this area has been obvious. The need to bring in various international technical inputs cannot be overemphasized. It is the view of the Government that international assistance would be greatly appreciated in further improving the NAP formulation and implementation process".

75. Without enumerating specific measures, the majority of the reports state that since the NAP process has only reached the stage of organizing the first national forum, no integrated programmes for combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought emanating from it are in place. But each report presents numerous other ongoing programmes and projects for combating land degradation which are undertaken by local populations with support from government and NGOs, their aim being to improve productivity, generate income, alleviate poverty and provide alternative livelihood systems. In this manner, the reports imply that the proposed NAP programmes can improve the environment and economic situation of the people.

76. Only some reports make brief statements on measures to improve the institutional organization for monitoring and evaluating measures to combat the effects of desertification, and these statements refer to both measures and procedures already in use under conservation strategies and national environment action plans and to measures proposed in the NAP.

77. Very brief statements are also made by some of the reports on partnership agreements applied, which refer to short-term memoranda of understanding signed between donors and government or local NGOs and CBOs for the implementation of natural resources community-based projects or pilot projects for the NAP; some

reports provide information on NAP support to CBOs implementing community-based pilot projects and signed agreements.

78. It should be appreciated that most of the information provided in the reports was on measures and activities which have only been formulated but not yet implemented. An extreme example of this is the case of information on the effectiveness of measures in local capacity-building; only three reports state that where NGOs have been working actively with local communities, a greater degree of responsibility has been achieved. The need to correct imbalances hindering active participation by some "disadvantaged groups", especially women, by developing and implementing targeted training programmes at community level was indicated.

79. With respect to measures taken in the framework of the NAP especially in the field of agricultural development, one report states that significant success has been achieved in evaluation and protection of water resources, and participation. The success is attributed to improvement and reduction of the bureaucracy and decentralization, as well as to the rising interest of important economic actors in the NAP process.

F. Financial allocations from national budgets in support of implementation as well as financial assistance and technical cooperation received and needed, identifying and prioritizing requirements

80. All reports supplied very scant information for this chapter, but it was sufficient to identify the following trends. Although not much has been done to ensure direct access by local actors to external funding for implementing projects within the NAP framework, all reports point out that government has always allocated resources, however modest, to ministries and departments that deal with management of natural resources, to implement projects with NGOs and CBOs at the community level. And although not fully integrated into the NAP process, such projects are combating land degradation and desertification. The amounts governments are putting into such projects vary greatly among the countries.

81. The national desertification fund being established by each Party, to which government, the private sector and donors are expected to contribute, is seen as the permanent form of funding which will ensure direct access by local actors to the implementation of community-level programmes to combat desertification. The fund is always formulated with broad-based participation of all stakeholders.

82. Eighteen Parties are still in the process of establishing a national desertification fund; three have completed the process and are only awaiting government approval; two are finalizing it; and the rest of the Parties do not mention such fund in their reports.

83. Some Parties mention that even when the fund is fully operational, the more "classical" financing and funding will continue to be the major source of funding for the NAP.

84. On NAP financing, all Parties report similar trends: government budgetary allocations to natural resources management sectors and directly to the NCB remain the main source of financing of the NAP process; during the NAP formulation phase several partners were approached and provided funding, particularly UNDP/UNSO, UNCCD secretariat and bilateral funding. Most reports quote the actual amounts of funds provided by governments over varying periods of time, and the amounts received from bilateral donors. Parties complain that the funding has not been adequate and some phase-one NAP activities are yet to be completed. Only one Party reported contacting the Global Mechanism and it is still awaiting their response. The other reports do not give reasons for not contacting the GM, or say when they will do so.

85. Plans for requesting technical cooperation have been included in the NAP programmes of the Parties. All Parties received technical assistance through the same partners as those that provided financial assistance, and from the subregional organizations, all in the form of consultants who provided advice and technical backstopping, issue papers and general direction during the NAP formulation phase.

86. All reports express the need for technical support, now that the NAP process is entering the implementation stage. The top priorities include assistance for technical inputs into the elaboration and implementation of concrete NAP programmes; capacity-building for NGOs, CBOs and disadvantaged groups, especially women, to ensure their effective implementation of the NAP; and scientific support. Some reports include a list of priority programmes to be implemented in the next two to five years, with an overall budget figure for funds needed. One report mentions that a round table for donors will be organized to ensure financing of newly identified activities within the NAP.

G. Review of the benchmarks and indicators utilized to
measure progress, and an assessment thereof

87. In brief, indicators for measuring progress and assessment are being developed by all Parties, and these will be based on current ones being used for the national conservation strategy or national environmental action plan or by the national environmental secretariat or council or any relevant department. Some reports state that they used the benchmarks and indicators adopted at the subregional level and evaluated the process of formulating the NAP, while others give a list of proposed indicators they intend to use as the NAP implementation process gets under way. A few reports show that Parties have established a team or committee to propose implementation and impact indicators and benchmarks. Parties which have produced state-of-the-environment reports have a more reliable source of information to build on in developing benchmarks and indicators.

88. The reports did not provide details on how Parties are implementing decision 22/COP.1, requesting governments to initiate testing of implementation indicators identified in document A/AC.241/INF.4 as revised by document ICCD/COP(1) CST/3/Add.1; and decision 16/COP.2. There is a need for the regional and subregional organizations and specialized institutions, particularly in Africa, to

assist Parties to implement these decisions and, where necessary, to develop common benchmarks and indicators so as to facilitate meaningful evaluation and comparison of implementation of the UNCCD. In so doing, the Parties and subregional organizations and specialized institutions will need financial and technical assistance as well as the cooperation of relevant international organizations, in accordance with decision 16/Cop.2, paragraph 4.

IV. LESSONS LEARNED

A. Lessons from the NAP formulation process

89. Referring to article 5 of the UNCCD on the obligations of affected country Parties, the national reports show that African country Parties have started laying the foundations for the long-term process of combating land degradation and mitigating the effects of drought, with the objectives of alleviating poverty and achieving sustainable development.

90. Budgetary resources are being allocated annually to the NCB and through sectoral programmes for natural resources management by all Parties "in accordance with their circumstances and capabilities". But given the magnitude of the problems of land degradation and the levels of poverty to be overcome, such resource allocation is not adequate. While an increase in government budgetary allocations to combating desertification is desirable and necessary, more resources can be "released" and made available if there is better coordination and harmonization of implementation of projects in the natural resources sectors, especially donor funded-projects, and coordination between the national, district and community levels. The real challenge to the Parties is to develop appropriate strategies for effective coordination and collaboration in the implementation of development plans and the three Rio conventions at the local level.

91. Institutional reform and development, including decentralization, legislative reforms and integration of strategic frameworks, are being carried out and provide an enabling environment for implementing the Convention. The challenge is that for these measures to be effective, the Parties have to create district and community-level development councils or committees that include representatives of all stakeholders and have resources, power and capacity to manage their natural resources and implement the UNCCD.

92. NAP priority programmes which have been formulated in most countries to combat desertification are by and large within the framework of conservation and environmental plans and policies. However, their implementation has to be coordinated and monitored to ensure that they are meeting sustainable development objectives and goals, especially at the local community level.

93. It is a well documented fact that in Africa poverty is both the cause and the consequence of land degradation and desertification, and this has been addressed in the NAP programmes proposed. Whereas bio-physical benchmarks and indicators exist

in various places and can be applied in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the programmes on combating desertification, socio-economic indicators have yet to be developed in the system of benchmarks and indicators to monitor the impact of the NAP programmes on poverty alleviation. This issue should receive more attention by Parties that are embarking on the implementation of the NAP programmes.

94. Parties have made great efforts to promote awareness and facilitate the participation of local populations, particularly women and youth, with the support of non-governmental organizations in response to article 5(d) of the Convention. The national reports document several awareness, sensitization and consultative seminars and workshops organized at various levels in each country. These are however not enough and they are only the beginning of a long process, for, in most countries only priority affected parts of the country have been selected for the sensitization and consultative process while other areas are yet to be covered. NGO and CBO forums were organized mainly at national level and have yet to be organized at district and local community level in some countries. In spite of national gender policies being formulated, the question of gender balance in the NCB and its various committees and in the formulation of concrete implementable NAP projects needs more serious and urgent attention than Parties seem to have given it, taking into consideration the many cultural, traditional and socio-political challenges involved in mainstreaming gender issues into the UNCCD process.

95. One of the major institutional measures taken by all African Parties is the establishment of a UNCCD national coordinating body with a multidisciplinary national steering committee which in most cases has several subcommittees, and a national focal point person and secretariat for the NAP, all to coordinate the formulation and implementation of the UNCCD and mobilize resources, both internal and international, for the process. These NCB structures are however "new" and need to be developed into permanent bodies and strengthened in terms of technical capacity and financial resources, a challenge which should be addressed by government institutions, NGOs, the private sector and international partners.

96. Developed country Parties have, to various extents, supported the UNCCD process in all African countries and the national reports provide information on the level of financial and technical support provided. But the reports also reveal that African country Parties perceive the involvement of international partners in the UNCCD process as being lower than expected, especially in the context of article 6(b) and (c) of the Convention. This is a big challenge to African country Parties individually and in their subregional and regional groupings, to redesign innovative strategies of involving donor partners, be it through donor forum consultations and information sharing on a regular basis, or by designating a lead donor, or by putting UNCCD implementation plans and projects on agendas of official government and NGO negotiations with donors, or a combination of all of the above.

97. On the part of the developed country Parties, the previous approach of funding specific activities or events during the NAP formulation process will not be suitable for NAP implementation. In the countries and across the various subregions

of Africa, a structured response from the donor community is called for as the way forward in developing partnership arrangements that provide predictable support for long-term implementation of programmes to combat desertification.

98. An opportunity for achieving synergy among the three Rio conventions exists but few national reports explained how coordination and collaboration among the conventions is being done. Guidelines prepared by the UNCCD secretariat and any other information on synergy among the conventions should be made available to country Parties and subregional organizations, which should jointly organize training sessions for the NCB organs and NGOs on how to forge synergy in the implementation of the three conventions, especially at district and local community level.

99. Although recommended in the Help Guide, African country Parties were not required to report on country profiles and none did. However, given sufficient guidelines, and resources, the Parties could and should prepare such country profiles before they formulate their second national reports to the COP, in order to facilitate comparison and wider circulation of their information.

B. Lessons from the national reporting process

100. Guidelines contained in decision 11/COP.1 and the Help Guide provided a common format for preparing the national reports, but variations in depth of coverage and content as well as style of presentation remain.

101. These being the first national reports on the implementation of the Convention, they should provide minimum baseline information and data as a benchmark from which to evaluate progress in the next round of national reporting. Generally, the reports provide baseline information on the establishment and functioning of the NCB; the first round of the sensitization, education and consultative process to ensure stakeholders' participation at national and local levels; priority programme areas for NAP implementation; resource mobilization and partnership arrangements; the convening of the first national forum; and the need to put in place benchmarks and indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the NAP process. The lesson in these first reports is that the foundation for implementing the Convention has been laid and needs strengthening so that the implementation of NAP programmes can have a firm base.

102. It is clear that the reports were written under extreme pressure due to the short time (one and a half to two months) available, and in the process some useful information might have been omitted. For example a few reports did not document the consultative and participatory process leading to the convening of the first national forum, and some others did not state whether or not the national forum has been or will be convened.

103. The Help Guide is perceived as being too detailed in the suggested questions, and asking for similar information in different sections, thus leading to possible duplication in the reporting.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

104. The Conference of the Parties is invited to:

(a) Receive the first national reports submitted and encourage those Parties that have not yet submitted their first national reports to do so as soon as they can;

(b) Consider the constraints and needs, both financial and technical, identified by the African Parties and take necessary action and measures to address them;

(c) Invite African Parties and other interested developing country Parties, as well as the cooperating partners, to give their feedback on the Help Guide as an input into a review of the Help Guide to be undertaken for the benefit of the reporting process worldwide.

Annex I**FORMAT AND CONTENT OF REPORTS**

(decision 11/COP.1, paragraph 10(a))

Reports should be as concise as possible to facilitate their review. They should be structured as follows, taking into account the degree of development of action programmes and other relevant circumstances:

Reports on national action programmes

- (i) A table of contents;
- (ii) A summary not exceeding six pages;
- (iii) The strategies and priorities established within the framework of sustainable development plans and/or policies;
- (iv) The institutional measures taken to implement the Convention;
- (v) The participatory process in support of the preparation and implementation of the action programme;
- (vi) The consultative process in support of the preparation and implementation of the national action programme and the partnership agreement with developed country Parties and other interested entities;
- (vii) The measures taken or planned within the framework of the national action programmes, including measures to improve the economic environment, to conserve natural resources, to improve institutional organization, to improve knowledge of desertification and to monitor and assess the effects of drought;
- (viii) Financial allocations from national budgets in support of implementation as well as financial assistance and technical cooperation received and needed, identifying and prioritizing requirements;
- (ix) A review of the benchmarks and indicators utilized to measure progress and an assessment thereof;

Annex II

COUNTRY PARTIES WHICH HAVE SUBMITTED THEIR NATIONAL REPORTS

1. Algeria
2. Angola
3. Benin
4. Botswana
5. Burkina Faso
6. Cameroon
7. Cape Verde
8. Chad
9. Côte d'Ivoire
10. Djibouti
11. Egypt
12. Eritrea
13. Ethiopia
14. Gambia
15. Ghana
16. Guinea
17. Kenya
18. Lesotho
19. Libya
20. Madagascar
21. Malawi
22. Mali
23. Mauritania
24. Morocco
25. Mozambique
26. Namibia
27. Niger
28. Nigeria
29. Rwanda
30. Senegal
31. South Africa
32. Sudan
33. Swaziland
34. Tanzania
35. Togo
36. Tunisia
37. Uganda
38. Zambia
39. Zimbabwe

Annex III

STATUS OF NATIONAL FORUMS

<u>Country</u>	<u>Date of national forum</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Date of national forum</u>
Algeria	x (1999)	Togo	✓June 1999
Angola	x	Tunisia	✓June 1998
Benin	✓August 1996	Uganda	✓November 1998
Botswana	✓October 1997	Zambia	✓December 1998
Burkina Faso	✓July 1997	Zimbabwe	✓August 1997
	✓July 1999		✓November 1998
Cameroon	x		
Cape Verde	✓November 1995		
	✓March 1998		
Chad	✓February 1999		
Côte d'Ivoire	x		
Djibouti	x (1999)		
Egypt	x		
Eritrea	x (1999)		
Ethiopia	✓November 1998		
Gambia	✓November 1998		
Ghana	x		
Guinea	x		
Kenya	✓October 1998		
Lesotho	✓March 1998		
Libya	x		
Madagascar	x		
Malawi	x (1999)		
Mali	✓May 1998		
Mauritania	x		
Morocco	x (1999)		
Mozambique	x (1999)		
Namibia	✓July 1994		
Niger	✓March 1998		
Nigeria	x		
Rwanda	x		
Senegal	✓May 1997		
	✓August 1998		
South Africa	x (1999)		
Sudan	✓October 1998		
Swaziland	✓September 1997		
Tanzania	x (1999)		

✓: National forum organized
x(1999): Plan to organize national
forum before December 1999
x: No information / not done

Annex IV

TABLE OF CONTENTS OF THE COMPILATION OF SUMMARIES
AS PRESENTED IN THE NATIONAL REPORTS

Countries	Document reference number	Page
1. Algeria	ICCD/COP(3)/5/Add.2 (A)	3
2. Angola	"	11
3. Benin	"	12
4. Botswana	"	13
5. Burkina Faso	"	20
6. Cameroon	"	28
7. Cape Verde	ICCD/COP(3)/5/Add.2 (B)	3
8. Chad	"	10
9. Côte d'Ivoire	"	12
10. Djibouti	"	12
11. Egypt	"	19
12. Eritrea	"	21
13. Ethiopia	"	24
14. Gambia	"	31
15. Ghana	"	33
16. Guinea	"	34
17. Kenya	ICCD/COP(3)/5/Add.2 (C)	3
18. Lesotho	"	12
19. Libya	"	15
20. Madagascar	"	23
21. Malawi	"	26
22. Mali	"	27
23. Mauritania	"	32
24. Morocco	ICCD/COP(3)/5/Add.2 (D)	3
25. Mozambique	"	9
26. Namibia	"	13
27. Niger	"	18
28. Nigeria	"	24
29. Rwanda	"	29
30. Senegal	"	31
31. South Africa	"	35
32. Sudan	ICCD/COP(3)/5/Add.2 (E)	3
33. Swaziland	"	10
34. Tanzania	"	15
35. Togo	"	20
36. Tunisia	"	26
37. Uganda	"	34
38. Zambia	"	40
39. Zimbabwe	"	46